

WESTCHESTER COUNTY'S MOST INVASIVE PLANTS

What is the opposite of a native plant? Some use the term “invasive” but we prefer to use the term “introduced”, because many plants that have been introduced from Asia, Europe or other parts of the United States can dominate native species once they become established. This is because, often, there are no native, naturally-occurring diseases, insects or predators to slow them down, because they are not part of our ecosystem. Not all introduced species are invasive, and, conversely, some native plants can be invasive also. In our area, there are some prominent introduced species to keep an eye out for – don’t plant them as part of your landscaping and remove them from around your home if possible.



Don't plant these!

And if you have them growing around your house, remove them, especially if they are near a waterway because their seeds can float downstream and invade stream banks far and wide.

DIVERSITY is what defines a healthy ecosystem. Certain plants can come to dominate the landscape because they can grow under virtually any conditions, they spread or set seed prolifically, they have no predators, or a combination of all of these properties. We need to curb the spread of these "thugs" wherever possible.



NORWAY MAPLE
Acer platanoides

This tree may look like our native maple trees, but it is a prolific seed producer and emits a chemical from its roots that inhibits the growth of other plants under and around it. You can tell a Norway maple when it's leaves are present by breaking off a leaf and looking for a white milky sap leaking from the stem – if you see the white sap you've made a positive ID! Remove Norway maple saplings from your landscape while they're small to make room for other trees.



BLACK LOCUST
Robinia pseudoacacia

Black locust trees have escaped cultivation and seed freely. They grow at least 2' per year and develop thickets, choking out other types of trees and shrubs. They become raggedy and scraggly with age.



TREE OF HEAVEN
Ailanthus altissima

These trees will grow up to 5' in a single season and tolerate any type of soil, air pollution and generally hostile environment. They spread from suckers as well as seeds, and because they grow so fast they can take hold anywhere and become rampant before you know it. Even pieces of root left behind will sprout into new trees.



WINGED EUONYMUS
Euonymus alatus

Also known as "Burning Bush" for its striking bright red fall foliage, this shrub is a prolific seed producer and tolerates just about any type of soil, full sun or full shade. Thus it has the potential to take over wherever its seeds land, including wild areas, woodland understory and your own landscape! Still sold in the Nursery trade, this shrub should not be planted!



JAPANESE BARBERRY
Berberis thunbergii

All forms of barberry are considered invasive. This shrub has been widely utilized in the landscaping business because it is deer-resistant and comes in purple-leaved and gold-leaved forms. It also has a beautiful fall color and red berries. However, it tolerates both sun and shade, and escapes to dominate both woodlands and meadows.



JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE
Lonicera japonica

Most forms of shrub honeysuckle are considered to be invasive in our area. You may consider the flowers to be pretty, but the shrub grows prolifically in both sun and shade, and can outgrow more valuable native plants. An exception is the native Trumpet honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*) with its large orangeish-pink and yellow flowers – it has a lot of wildlife value.



AUTUMN OLIVE

Elaeagnus umbellata

Autumn olive is a tall deciduous shrub with silvery undersides to the leaves, light yellow flowers and small reddish-pink berries. This shrub prefers full sun but will grow in just about any soil type, giving it the advantage over many types of native shrubs that have more specific habitat requirements.



MULTIFLORA ROSE

Rosa multiflora

This is one of the nastiest landscape “thugs” because it looks like a rose, it certainly has lots of thorns, and unlike most cultivated roses it tolerates shade. It is an extremely aggressive spreader, especially in woodlands. It forms thorny thickets that are daunting to tackle, but if you have this plant in your landscape, you should remove it by cutting it back and digging it out by the roots.



PORCELAIN-BERRY

Amelopsis brevipedunculata

This vine has yellow, green or lilac fruits that ripen to bright blue, white or marbled colors. The fruit may look beautiful, but porcelain-berry is a prolific grower that climbs and smothers existing plants.



ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET

Celastrus orbiculatus

Easily recognizable by its yellow-orange and red fruit in fall, it is an extremely strong climber that wraps around trees and shrubs, girdling them.



PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

Lythrum salicaria

This is a perennial, but it is a great threat to wetlands. With tall magenta flowers in mid-to-late summer, it colonizes disturbed sites and invades wetlands, where it can come to dominate.



JAPANESE KNOTWEED

Fallopia japonica

This is a fast-spreading invasive that colonizes disturbed sites and invades the edge of the wetland. It is extremely hard to eradicate, so you have to be vigilant and keep at it!



GARLIC MUSTARD

Alliaria petiolata

Garlic mustard is a ubiquitous biennial weed with distinctive triangular to heart-shaped coarsely-toothed leaves and white flowers in the second season. It can also be recognized by the erect stalks of dried seedpods predominating in late summer. Garlic mustard is found in disturbed areas, particularly in moist shaded soil like roadsides, edges of woodlands and woodland trails. This plant competes directly with native spring ephemeral wildflowers by monopolizing moisture, nutrient, soil and space resources.



MILE-A-MINUTE WEED

Persicaria perfoliata

This is an extremely nasty annual vine because it grows very rapidly, engulfing shrubs and other vegetation. It can be recognized by its distinctive cup-shaped structures surrounding the stem nodes. Plants that are engulfed in vines are weakened because they don't get adequate sun reaching their foliage for photosynthesis. Mile-a-Minute weed can also smother tree seedlings.

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<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder>

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/index.html>

<http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/weeds/>

<http://www.dnr.wi.gov/invasives/>

SOME ALTERNATIVES FOR THE RESIDENTIAL HOMEOWNER:

The plants listed below provide some of the same landscape qualities as the introduced plants described above that have become invasive in our area. These alternatives are desirable trees and shrubs and will add to the diversity of your landscape. Many of them are native, and all are suggested here because they are easily cultivated. HOWEVER, not all of these plants are deer-resistant! You should consult with your local nursery or landscape designer to find out specifics concerning your area's deer habits and food preferences. What follows is by no means a comprehensive listing; we aim to provide you with inspiration to do additional research on plants that you might like to have.



Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*). Try this tree to take the place of Norway maples – it tolerates a wide variety of conditions and has gorgeous red fall foliage.



'Forest Pansy' Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'). A beautiful native tree with large heart-shaped leaves to add burgundy color to your landscape design.



Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*). This native has a coarse appearance similar to the Tree of Heaven, with large compound leaves and spiky seedheads persisting through winter to provide food for birds.



Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*). This native small tree can tolerate a wide range of habitats and provides all-season interest to the landscape, including spring flowers, berries, beautiful fall foliage and interesting bark.



Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*). This native shrub can tolerate sun or shade, is relatively compact, has beautiful fall color and provides an excellent alternative to Burning Bush or Japanese Barberry.



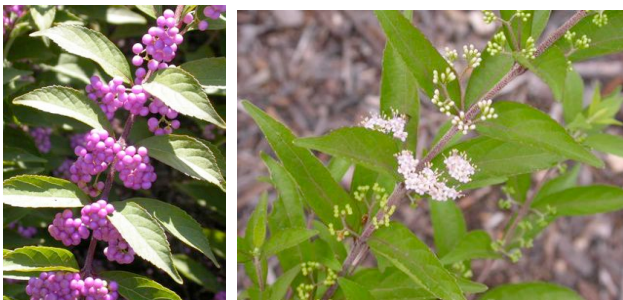
Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*). This purple-leafed shrub can add much-needed foliage color to the landscape design, and provides all-season interest as well with flowers, seed-heads and multi-colored exfoliating bark.



Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). This native evergreen shrub grows in the understory, and new hybrids available in the Nursery trade stay compact enough for any area of your garden.



Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*). This native shrub is excellent for naturalizing, has interesting large leaves and flowers in summer. It's a colony-former that's not too aggressive, so could be planted in areas where multiflora rose, honeysuckle or Japanese knotweed had been located.



Beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*). This shrub is an excellent alternative to Porcelain-berry – even more dramatic because its berries are a startling amethyst purple! Fruits persist into winter, attracting birds.



Rugosa Rose or Beach Rose (*Rosa rugosa*). Although not as refined as hybrid tea roses, this wild rose is carefree and a great substitute for multiflora rose. It is long-blooming and develops beautiful rose hips that persist in winter.



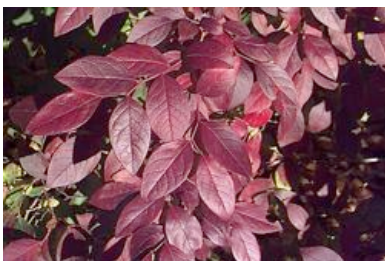
Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*). This vine is attractive to hummingbirds and can be a wonderful substitute for honeysuckle or Oriental bittersweet.



Carolina Allspice (*Calycanthus floridus*). This dense, bushy native shrub has maroon flowers with a beautiful fragrance in May, and golden fall color.



Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*). This multi-stemmed shrub (can become a small tree) is tolerant of just about any conditions – sun or shade, wet or dry – has white fruit that is attractive to birds and a reddish-purple fall color.



Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*). This native shrub has white flowers in spring that turn into real blueberries! The mockingbirds and catbirds will eat them for you! This slow-growing compact shrub also has a brilliant red fall color. The perfect substitute for Burning Bush!



Corneliancherry Dogwood (*Cornus mas*). This small tree is tough and adaptive, forming colonies. It flowers in early spring before the leaves emerge, then bears delicious fruits, beloved by birds, in mid-summer. This is an excellent choice for areas where knotweed may have taken over.



Moor Grass



Northern Sea Oats



Little Bluestem



Fountain Grass

Ornamental grasses are versatile additions to the landscape. There are large clump-forming grasses like Moor grass (*Molinia arundinacea* 'Skracer') that can be used in place of shrubs. There are smaller grasses that can be used in the front of the border or in masses, like dwarf fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*). There are medium-sized grasses with very ornamental leaves and/or flowers, like Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), a native meadow grass that turns a beautiful copper color in fall and Northern Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), a native grass with drooping seed heads that will grow in shade. There are also grasses that will spread as groundcovers in the woodland garden. Its worthwhile to do some research and find out if ornamental grasses can work in your design.

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